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NEWS RELEASE

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LOCAL STUDENT'S TEAM WINS NATIONAL MOOT COURT CHAMPIONSHIP

MISSOULA--

A trio of Montana law students brought home a national championship from New York City when they aced the National Moot Court Competition in February.

The winning team -- Taryn Stampfl of **Eureka**, John Mudd of **Missoula** and Bobbi Frazer of **Plains** and **Billings** -- represented The University of Montana School of Law at the final competition, held Jan. 31-Feb. 3.

The Moot Court Competition is a mock appellate argument, with students acting as lawyers who argue a fictional case before the U.S. Supreme Court. The case involves an actual issue pending before the Supreme Court, as well as a second issue that can be constitutional, statutory or procedural.

The third-year law students earned their first-place spot arguing in front of some of the country's top legal figures, including judges from U.S. District Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals and the New York Court of Appeals. Despite the impressive panel, the Montanans kept their cool, which may have contributed to their winning strategy.

"I think Montana has sort of distinguished itself by just being there and not getting stressed out," said Assistant Professor Larry Howell, who joined law school Associate Dean

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Melissa Harrison in coaching the team. "Our team was laughing and joking while a lot of the other teams were really stressed out. I think it sort of psyched out the other teams because it looked like we were a lot more sure of ourselves."

Montana last won the moot court championship in 1981.

This year's main argument was based on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court decision that said law enforcement officers no longer were required to give Miranda warnings before a defendant's confession became admissible. The actual decision is now pending before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The second issue concerned whether the admission of a dead accomplice's confession violated a defendant's Confrontation Clause rights.

The three Montana students and their coaches landed in New York after trouncing the opposition at November's regional competition in Spokane, Wash.

Harrison pointed out that UM participants receive only two credits and no financial incentives, unlike those at many other schools that have well-funded moot court programs.

"It's especially wonderful to be a small school that is viewed as an underdog and to win the whole competition," she said.

The team is sponsored by the **Butte** law firm of Poore, Roth & Robinson, P.C.

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